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CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editors of the *American Naturalist* :

I have recently had occasion to do some work which involved the comparison of genera in several groups of vertebrates, and in my studies I have made some discoveries which were rather surprising to me. For instance, I find our thrushes, in many works, distributed between two or three genera, our wood thrush being in the genus *Turdus*, the common robin in the genus *Merula*. The sole differences I find recorded between these two genera are best shown in the deadly parallel :

TURDUS.	MERULA.
Bill much widened at the base.	Bill little widened at the base.
Tarsi decidedly longer than middle toe and claw.	Tarsi little longer than middle toe and claw.
Spotted beneath.	Beneath mostly unicolor with streaked throat.
Of small stature and rather slender form.	Large, stout.

Again, I find our pestiferous English sparrow in the genus *Passer*, while the purple finch is in the genus *Carpodacus*. The distinctions between these two genera are :

PASSER.	CARPODACUS.
Bill without nasal ruff.	Nasal ruff little developed.
Culmen curved.	Culmen moderately curved.
Commissure little angulated.	Commissure decidedly angulated.
Gonys convex, ascending.	Gonys straight.
Wing five times the length of carpus.	Wing not quite five times the length of carpus.
Wing pointed by first three quills.	Wing pointed by first three or four quills.
Tail shorter than wings.	Tail much shorter than wings.
Tail nearly even.	Tail forked.
Tarsus about equal to middle toe and claw.	Tarsus shorter than middle toe and claw.
Lateral toes of equal length.	Lateral toes subequal.
Claws of lateral toes not reaching to base of middle claw.	Claws of lateral toes reaching the base of middle claw.

Turning to the higher groups, I find families distinguished by characters of hardly more importance, thus:

TURDIDÆ.	SYLVIIDÆ.
First primary short, strictly spurious.	First primary short, sometimes strictly spurious.
Bill rather long, usually notched at the tip.	Bill slender, notched, and decurved at the tip.
Tarsi always booted.	Tarsi usually booted.
Tail shorter than wings.	Wings longer or not longer than tail.
Tarsus little, if any, longer than middle toe and claw.	Tarsus longer than middle toe and claw.
Basal joint of middle toe attached its whole length externally, halfway internally to adjacent toes.	Inner toe free ; outer toe united to middle toe for not half its length.
Size medium.	Size small.

Now, with this preamble, my question is this : Are these genera and families equivalent to genera and families in other groups? To me it would seem that the distinctions between *Merula* and *Turdus* and between *Passer* and *Carpodacus* are not equivalent to those used to distinguish even subgenera in other groups of vertebrates or invertebrates ; while the family characters quoted would be of not more than generic rank in, say, reptiles or fishes. However, this is merely the opinion of one not an ornithologist, and I would like the views of other naturalists upon the subject. Cannot you induce students interested in the systematic study of vertebrates — ornithologists, mammalogists, herpetologists, and ichthyologists — to express their views upon the matter? I am sure that a discussion of the questions involved would interest many readers of the *American Naturalist*.

ZOOLOGIST.